A History of Indian Buddhism

From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna

Hirakawa Akira

Translated and Edited by Paul Groner

Introduction

The Special Characteristics of Indian Buddhism

BECAUSE BUDDHISM originated and developed in India, using the adjective "Indian" to describe it may seem unnecessary. When Buddhism spread beyond India to Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, Japan, and other lands, certain aspects of Buddhism were emphasized in each locale, generating a wide variety of interpretations and practices. Buddhism was adapted to meet the requirements of the people of each area, resulting in a wide variation of interpretations. Indian Buddhism, too, had unique characteristics not emphasized in other regions. Thus, the term "Indian Buddhism" is often used today to distinguish it from the Buddhism of other countries.

When Indian Buddhism is compared to Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, differences in climate and geography are seen to affect religious practice; those adaptations in practice brought about changes in doctrine. In contrast, the countries where Theravāda Buddhism is practiced—such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand—have climates and geographies resembling those of India more than those of China and Japan. As a result, Theravāda religious practice is much closer to Indian Buddhism than to East Asian Buddhism.

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Figure 7. Comparison of the Different Systems of the Ten Stages

Daśabhūmika Ten Stages	*P'u-sa pen-yeh ching* (*T* 281) Ten Abodes	*Mahāvastu* Ten Stages	*Perfection of Wisdom* Ten Stages
1. *Pramuditā* (joyful)	*Fa-i* (aspiration to enlightenment)	*Durārohā* (difficult to enter)	*Śuklavidarśanā* (pure insight)
2. *Vimalā* (immaculate)	*Chih-ti* (well-regulated abode)	*Baddhamālā* (fastening)	*Gotra* (family)
3. *Prabhākarī* (radiant)	*Ying-hsing* (religious practice)	*Puṣpamaṇḍitā* (adorned with flowers)	*Aṣṭamaka* (eighth man)
4. *Arciṣmatī* (blazing)	*Sheng-kuei* (noble rebirth)	*Rucirā* (beautiful)	*Darśana* (insight)
5. *Sudurjayā* (difficult to conquer)	*Hsiu-ch'eng* (completion of practice)	*Cittavistarā* (expansion of the mind)	*Tanu* (weakening)
6. *Abhimukhī* (facing wisdom)	*Hsing-teng* (ascending)	*Rūpavatī* ((lovely)	*Vītarāga* (separation from desire)
7. *Dūraṅgamā* (far-going)	*Pu-t'ui* (nonretrogression)	*Durjayā* (difficult to conquer)	*Kṛtāvī* (accomplishment)
8. *Acalā* (immovable)	*T'ung-chen* (chaste youth)	*Jamanideśa* (ascertainment of birth)	*Pratyekabuddha*
9. *Sādhumatī* (good intelligence)	*Liang-sheng* (crown prince)	*Yauvarājya* (installation as crown prince)	Bodhisattva
10. *Dharmameghā* (cloud of the Dharma)	*P'u-ch'u* (last birth before Buddhahood)	*Abhiṣekatā* (consecration and coronation)	Buddha

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